

Message Text

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43

ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6233

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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"LONDON POUCH TO BELFAST"

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, EI, UK

SUBJECT: O CONAILL SAYS IRA DID NOT ORDER BIRMINGHAM BOMBINGS

REF: DUBLIN 1674

1. DUBLIN "SUNDAY PRESS" DECEMBER 1 GAVE INTERVIEW WITH DAITHI O CONAILL, WHO IS BELIEVED TO BE CHIEF-OF-STAFF OF PROVISIONAL IRA. HE INSISTED THAT RECENT BOMBS IN ENGLAND (BIRMINGHAM AND LONDON) HAD NOT BEEN ORDERED BY IRA LEADERSHIP AND THAT HE STILL DID NOT KNOW WHETHER ANY PROVISIONAL IRA MEMBERS WERE INVOLVED. IRA ARMY COUNCIL HAD BEGUN AN INQUIRY AND WOULD, HE SAID, RELEASE THE TRUTH EVEN IF IT IS UNPALATABLE. SO FAR, ALL HE COULD SAY WAS THAT THE SIX MEN CHARGED WITH BIRMINGHAM BOMBINGS WERE NOT MEMBERS OF "ANY BRANCH OF THE REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT" (PRESUMABLY MEANING SINN FEIN OR IRA). O CONAILL SAID HE SUPPORTED DECISION OF IRA LEADERSHIP "TO REJECT OUTRIGHT THE BOMBING OF CIVILIANS," SINCE IT HAD NOT BEEN EFFECTIVE IN THE PAST. HE ALSO CONDEMNED BOMBING OF INNOCENT CIVILIANS ON MORAL GROUNDS. HE WENT ON TO SUGGEST, HOWEVER, THAT MILITARY, POLICE, JUDGES, AND CIVIL SERVANTS MIGHT NOT BE "INNOCENT." IN THIS CONNECTION, HE APPEARED TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CATTERICK COACH EXPLOSION IN ENGLAND,

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SINCE IT WAS DIRECTED AT MILITARY PERSONNEL, EVEN THOUGH SOME

CIVILIANS TURNED OUT TO BE ON BUS. HE ALSO SAID THAT IRA WOULD MAINTAIN ITS POLICY OF "TAKING THE WAR TO THE MAINLAND OF BRITAIN."

2. O CONAILL STRONGLY DENIED THAT ANY IRA MEMBERS WERE INVOLVED IN NI SECTARIAN ASSASSINATIONS, SAYING ZWE DON'T SUPPORT SUCH ACTIONS IN THE LEAST."

3. O CONAILL HINTED THAT PROVOS MIGHT HAVE TO RECONSIDER THEIR POLICY OF AVOIDING VIOLENCE IN THE REPUBLIC IF GOI PASSED LEGISLATION AIMED AT COOPERATION WITH THE BRITISH.

4. COMMENT: ONE POSSIBLE EXPLANATION OF O CONAILL'S DISAVOWALS IS THAT HE IS LYING. WE ARE INCLINED TO GUESS THAT BAD COORDINATION BETWEEN "REPUBLICANS" IS MORE LIKELY.
MOORE

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